17. The method of claim 16 wherein there is at least one segment for each character in the displayed character group.

18. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of displaying the characters of at least one of the plurality of character groups comprises simultaneously displaying the characters of a character group in the segments of the display window.

19. The method of claim 16 wherein the number of segments is adjustable.

20. The method of claim 16, wherein the display window is divided into ten segments.

21. The method of claim 16 wherein the boundary of any segment is adjustable.

22. The method of claim 16 wherein the segments are generally pie-shaped.

23. The method of claim 16 wherein the display window contains at least one universal segment that is not associated with the characters of the character groups.

24. The method of claim 23 wherein a character is assigned to the universal segment.

25. The method of claim 23 wherein the universal segment is located at the center of the display window.

26. The method of claim 24 wherein the character assigned to the universal segment is a "space" character.

27. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of specifying the character group, from among the plurality of character groups available for display comprises selecting an action key from a plurality of buttons.

28. The method of claim 27 wherein at least one action key is a key selected from the group consisting of: a hard key; and soft key.

29. The method of claim 27 wherein an action key has more than one character group associated therewith, and the step of specifying the character group, from among the plurality of character groups associated with the action key, desired for display comprises an action selected from the group consisting of:

a single-click;

a double-click;

a user-defined button-click sequence; and

button selection and hold.

30. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of displaying the characters of one of the plurality of character groups in the display window comprises displaying a default character group consisting of a plurality of the most frequently used characters in the collection of characters.

31. The method of claim 27 wherein the step of replacing a displayed character group with the default character group is accomplished by a user action selected from the group consisting of:

a single-click;

a double-click;

a user-defined button-click sequence;

the release of an action key;

automatically by the selection of a character from the displayed character group; and

the expiration of a time-out period.

32. The method of claim 31 wherein the action keys and user actions associated with particular character groups are user-customizable.

33. The method of claim 1 wherein there is at least one selection button for every segment in the display window, and each selection button is associated with only one display window segment.

34. The method of claim 33 wherein the arrangement of the selection keys with respect to one another physically resembles the arrangement of the individual segments in the display window.

35. The method of claim 1 wherein the character displayed in the display window segment at the time that the selection button associated with that segment is selected by a user becomes the character specified for entry.

36. The method of claim 35 wherein the action performed on the selection key determines the case of the character entered.

37. The method of claim 36 wherein a single-click selection action enters a lower-case alphanumeric, and a press-and-hold selection action enters an upper-case alphanumeric

38. The method of claim 36 wherein a double-click of a space character segment is interpreted as the user's selection of a carriage return.

39. The method of claim 1 wherein there is a selection button causing all the characters found in the segments associated with that button to be recorded as input.

40. The method of claim 1 wherein the steps for character entry are controlled by a programmable controller within a hand held electronic device.

41. The method of claim 40 wherein the hand held electronic device includes a touch-sensitive display.

42. A user operable system for the selection of characters utilizing character groups, determined from a collection of characters, depicted on a display screen, comprising:

a. a display window on a display screen;

b. at least one segment within the display window associated with each character in a character group;

c. at least one action key for specifying the character group to display; and

d. at least one character selection key for each display window segment.

43. The user operable system of claim 42 where the physical arrangement of a plurality of selection keys corresponds to the physical arrangement of a plurality of the display window segments.

44. The user operable system of claim 42 where at least one selection key is a transparent soft key.

45. The user operable system of claim 44 where at least one selection key is positioned directly over its associated display window segment.

46. The user operable system of claim 42 where at least one selection key is a hard key.

47. The user operable system of claim 42 where a plurality of selection keys are positioned on the same face of the device as the display window.

48. The user operable system of claim 42 where a plurality of selection keys are positioned on the opposite face of the device as the display window.

49. The user operable system of claim 48 where the physical arrangement of a plurality of the selection keys corresponds to the physical arrangement of a plurality of the display window segments.